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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3222
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SUBJECT: TURKEY: POL-MIL ROUND-UP: January 2008

(Note: This is one of a regular series of unclassified reports on significant Turkish defense and national security issues in the press and other open sources. End note.)

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Turkey Continues Cross-Border Operation in N. Iraq

11. Turkey carried out air strikes against PKK terrorist positions in northern Iraq on January 15. Turkish General Staff (TGS) announced that over 60 targets were hit. Counter-terrorism operations within Southeast Turkey against PKK terrorists continued during month. TGS reported that 36 terrorists were captured and 17 surrendered in the operations in Southeast, while no information on the number of casualties in the cross-border operation was released.

Anti-Terrorism High Council Convenes

12. The Anti-Terrorism High Council convened under Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Cicek on January 23. Cabinet members, high-level military and intelligence officials participated in the meeting. A statement released following the meeting noted that the Council assessed the ongoing counter-terrorism activities and discussed diplomatic, economic, social and other measures to be taken against terrorism. The Council, as reported by the semi-official Anatolian News Agency (ANA), reiterated Turkey's determination to combat terrorism and assessed that on-going military operations have been effective against PKK terrorists based in northern Iraq.

Retired General Detained for Weapons, Assassination Plots

13. Thirty-three persons, including retired BG Veli Kucuk (one of the founders of the Turkish Jandarma's intelligence unit JITEM) and ret. COL Fikri Karadag, were arrested on the grounds that they are members of an illegal organization code-named 'Ergenekon.' The investigation began with the discovery of grenades eight months ago in a house in Umraniye district of Istanbul. Ergenekon has been linked by police to a number of attacks, including the January 2007 murder of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, February 2006 murder of an Italian priest in Trabzon and the May 2006 Council of State killings in Ankara. Turkish dailies reported that all of the revealed members of the organization are public servants, many of whom are former intelligence officers. Various pro-AKP and centralist dailies reported that 'Ergenekon' planned to create a chaos in Turkey through bombings in order to prepare the ground for a coup in 2009. The investigation is on-going.

High Level Defense Group Meeting Held in Washington

14. Turkish Deputy CHOD GEN Ergin Saygun led the Turkish delegation to the annual High Level Defense Group (HLDG) meeting in Washington DC on January 29-31. GEN Saygun co-chaired the 21st annual bilateral meeting along with Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Mary Beth Long. Bilateral military cooperation, foreign military sales credits, cooperation in training and defense industry were discussed in the HLDG meeting. GEN Saygun also met with his counterpart, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen James Cartwright, Supreme Allied Commander Europe GEN John Craddock, and Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns. GEN Saygun visited several U.S. military bases and

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facilities before he returned to Turkey on February 7.

Turkey's Security Relations with Other Countries

15. Iraq: Turkish Deputy Chief of TGS GEN Ergin Saygun met with his Iraqi counterpart Gen. Nasier Abadi in Baghdad on January 15. Issues related to the armed forces of both countries including counterterrorism and long-term military cooperation were discussed. GEN Saygun also met with Commander of Multinational Forces GEN David Petraeus in Baghdad. Counterterrorism activities were discussed in the meeting, and the determination of both countries in cooperating against terrorism was reiterated, according to Turkish media accounts.

16. Italy: Turkish Chief of General Staff GEN Yasar Buyukanit received Italian Defense Minister Prof. Arturo Parisi on January 16. The visit followed GEN Buyukanit's official counterpart visit to Italy in October 2007. No information on the visit was made public.

17. UK: Turkish CHOD GEN Buyukanit met with his British counterpart GEN Richard Dannet on January 21 in London. Their talks focused mostly on Turkey's fight against terrorism, as reported by the moderate pro-Islamic Zaman daily. GEN Buyukanit was also received by British Chief of Defense Staff Sir Jock Stirrup, British Defense Secretary Des Browne and Foreign Secretary David Miliband. Around

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200 PKK supporters in London staged protests against the visit and the cross-border operations, as reported by the center-right Sabah daily.

18. Macedonia: Turkish CHOD GEN Yasar Buyukanit received Macedonian Defense Minister Lazar Elenovski on January 30. GEN Buyukanit and Elenovski held a live joint news conference at the TGS Headquarters. This was the first time in memory that such a meeting was held with media present. Underlining close military cooperation between the two countries, GEN Buyukanit noted that 346 Macedonian military officers have been trained at the NATO's Partnership for Peace facilities in Ankara, 61 at the NATO's Center of Excellence-Defense

against Terrorism in Ankara, while a Turkish Special Team trained 375 Macedonian personnel in Macedonia. Answering journalists' questions, GEN Buyukanit underlined Turkish military's unchangeable stance on the headscarf issue and dismissed military's link to the ultra-nationalist Ergenekon gang.

¶9. Qatar: Turkish Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul visited Qatar's Chief of General Staff on January 21. No information about the subject of their meeting was made public, as reported by the ANA.

¶10. Greece: TGS reported 49 air interceptions by Greek jets in international airspace over the Aegean Sea in January. 32 incidents of violation of Turkish territorial waters in the Aegean, and one violation of airspace were reported in January.

Defense Industry Activity -----

¶11. Turkish defense company Aselsan speeded up design and manufacture process for ASELPD (navigation targeting pod) that will enable warplanes to launch night operations by providing day time operation conditions. ASELPD will supersede LANTIRN (Low Altitude Navigation and Targeting Infrared for Night). ASELPD is expected to be delivered to the TAF in 2009 (ANA).

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